

LommelTV:

Trial of Alcatel's 5900 My Own TV in the Belgian city of Lommel

Introduction

LommelTV is an Alcatel owned trial of Alcatel's 5900 My Own TV Solution in the city of Lommel. A one year trial has started in May 2006 and other involved parties are the Belgian government, the Belgian federal organization for ICT, the municipality of Lommel and last but not least, the citizens and communities of Lommel. Lommel residents, sports clubs, youth clubs, video clubs and local enterprises can create their own on-demand television channels, which can be consumed on normal television sets.



Alcatel 5900 My Own TV is an end-to-end solution to provide dedicated advertisements, niche content (e.g. music), local content and user generated content in a cost effective way on television, respecting the passive television watching experience. My Own TV channels are being defined as an aggregation of on-demand clips linked to the same interest field, and are brought in a unicast way (like Video on Demand) and not broadcast way to end users. My Own TV brings the long tail of content, i.e. 90% of the content worldwide available on television as a standard television experience to end-users. Consumers can zap from broadcast channels to community channels, by using the same remote control and with the same user interface and look and feel as they have for broadcast content. My Own TV brings thus content sharing facilities, currently only available on the Internet, to the television world, in a lean backward manner. This is done in a secure and managed way in order to prevent spam and quality degradation.

Status – August 2006

Headed by a pre-trial since November 2005, LommelTV launched officially end May 2006 with 21 Set-top Boxes. Mid August 2006, 62 set-top boxes were distributed of which 5 are placed in public places (like town hall, café,..). In some months this will scale up to 200 set-top boxes. The initial 8 communities have grown to 26 communities, among which: a dance club, a video club, sport clubs, a music ensemble, streets and neighborhoods, youth clubs and local commerce organizations. More than 45 open My Own TV channels have been created on LommelTV, to which all set-top box owners can tune into. Numerous closed channels are available as well, for which subscription only is possible via invitation from the channel owners. In total, 110 videos have meanwhile been created, distributed over these channels. (All numbers are for mid August 2006 timeframe, less than 3 months since the start of the trial).

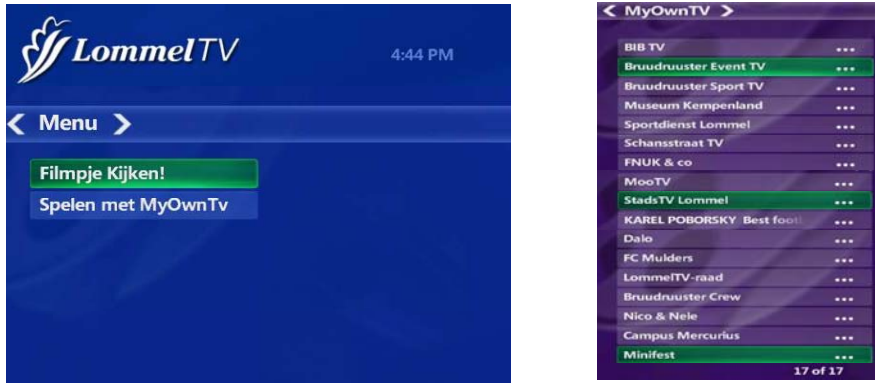


Figure 1 Main LommelTV menu and list of some of the LommelTV channels

LommelTV Description

LommelTV uses the release 2.0 of the Alcatel 5900 My Own TV application and is supported by the Microsoft TV IPTV Edition Release 1.0.1. The server side solution runs on HP servers, the Tatung set-top box is being used and in home content transmission is done via Devolo Powerplugs.



Figure 2 Alcatel 5900 My Own TV solution overview

End users upload content to LommelTV via a web interface, on which functionalities are available to create channels or invite people to My Own TV channels. The web client looks as follows:



Figure 3 LommelTV web interface for channel management

User Research & Feedback

LommelTV mainly focuses on content created by communities and observes how and when viral marketing starts playing a role. Therefore, Alcatel cooperates with the School for Mass Communication of the University of Leuven in Belgium to get detailed information on the involved communities, the usage of LommelTV and the qualitative impact on the relationship within these communities. Therefore, initially lead communities were selected which had or a strong technical knowledge or which had very strong social bindings. One of the main reasons for many communities to participate in LommelTV is to share easily media created during events and to recruit more members for their club.

End users stressed the importance of being able to showcase their clips as well on the Internet as on LommelTV and this is already taken into account in the My Own TV release 3.2 which will provide a web client for content viewing, as well as automatic content ingestion from Internet sources into My Own TV. Detailed reporting of clip viewing statistics to channel owners is cited as one of the key factors to stimulate people in continuing creating new content.

Many LommelTV participants cited the presence of LommelTV-alike functionalities being crucial when they would be selecting among different digital television orders. The current enthusiasm and the many requests to be able to become part of the LommelTV trial confirm that user generated content on television will be one of the differentiating features for next generation IPTV offers. Appearing on television and the opportunity of becoming channel director are said to provide great fun.



Figure 4 Lommel City Channel, Community Channel, Street Channel

In the coming months, more people will join LommelTV and new communities like schools, social housing districts and local commerce will actively be involved.

Conclusion

LommelTV is used by residents in Lommel to create their own on-demand channels, showing their personal media. Intermediate feedback shows that people like to be channel director and that local, personal and relevant content on television is highly appreciated when brought as a normal television experience. User generated content on television will be an important feature for operators to be able to differentiate with their IPTV offering and exploits maximally the inherent unicast characteristic of IPTV.